

REMARKS

The Office Action of December 26, 2006, has been carefully considered.

Claims 1, 2 and 4 through 14 have been rejected under 35 USC 112, first and second paragraphs, on the basis that it is not clear what the "screwing means" of Claim 1 encompasses. The claims of record have now been canceled and replaced by a new set of Claims 21 through 33 in which all elements are clearly defined, and the term "screwing means" is not used.

Withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4 and 5 have been rejected under 35 USC 103 over Hannon in view of Barca.

The claimed invention is directed to a capping machine which makes possible both screwing of a cap onto the neck of a receptacle and crimping in a single axial displacement of the capping head. In order to accomplish this result, the machine comprises a rotating means for rotating the capping head and an axial displacement means for moving the capping head closer to and away from the neck of the receptacle which is fixed in axial position. The capping head comprises a bearing head which retains the cap for the screwing and crimping operation, and which is selectively coupled to the capping head for rotation and axial displacement, resilient means for applying force to the cap through the bearing head during at least a part of the rotating of the capping head and means for decoupling the bearing head from rotation of the capping head when torque on the bearing head increases beyond a predetermined level, thus signaling the completion of screwing the cap onto the receptacle. Further, the capping head includes means for decoupling the bearing head from the axial displacement of the capping head when the axial displacement of the cap terminates by blocking further rotation of the cap by the neck of the receptacle. A means is provided for

crimping the skirt under the crimping ring of the neck, and a further means is provided for coupling the axial displacement means to the crimping means upon termination of the rotation and axial movement of the bearing head, thereby activating the crimping means to crimp the skirt under the crimping ring. Thus, the axial displacement means activates the crimping means when the axial displacement of the cap terminates, thereby enabling both screwing and crimping in a single operation.

The Office action states that Hannon discloses a capping head provided with screwing means comprised of spindle 48 and plunger 27 to screw the cap onto the upper portion of the bottle, and a crimping means which bends the skirt portion to contact the outer ring-shaped portion of the bottle. Applicants disagree with this interpretation of Hannon.

In fact, Hannon is not seen to contain any means for screwing the cap onto the bottle. At the time when the device of Hannon is activated, the cap is already fully in place on the bottle, either with or without threads on the cap. Hannon provides four means for acting on the cap:

- 1) a plunger 27 which provides an axial force on the cap;
- 2) a cap turning roller 68, which turns the lower end of the cap inwardly beneath the bottle shoulder (see column 5, lines 49-51);
- 3) a scoring roller 69 which scores the cap to form a separation between the cap and a skirt portion which breaks away upon removal of the cap; and
- 4) rollers 65 and 66 which are used to form the cap to conform to the threads on the bottle top (see column 5, lines 60-65).

Thus, Hannon does not provide any means for screwing the cap onto the bottle, only means for crimping the lower portion of the skirt of the cap onto the neck of the bottle after the

cap is in place.

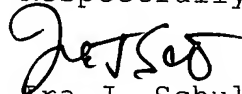
Barca does disclose means for screwing a cap onto a bottle, but there is no disclosure or suggestion of providing a crimping means in combination with this screwing device, and no disclosure or suggestion of providing a crimping means which would be activated by the axial movement of the capping head.

As the claimed invention is not disclosed or suggested by the cited art, withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

The allowability of Claims 6 through 14 has been noted. New Claims 24 through 33 are thought to be of the scope of the allowable claims.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that the present application is now in condition for allowance. An early allowance of the application with amended claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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